



CENTRE for AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES

**Press Release**

**“Russia-Ukraine War: A Crisis beyond Borders”**

7 July 2022



***Pakistan’s policy, when it comes to relations with major powers, has always been consistent. Pakistan wants balanced, objective, and broad-based relations, based on mutual interest, mutual benefit, and mutual respect, with all major powers, including the US, China, Russia, and others.***

This was the key message of the seminar on **‘Russia-Ukraine War: A Crisis beyond Borders’** organised by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS) in Islamabad. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar was the Keynote Speaker, while other eminent panellists included Ambassador Riaz Khokhar, former Foreign Secretary, GoP; Lieutenant General Aamer Riaz (Retd), President, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS); Dr Usman W. Chohan, Director (Economic Affairs & National Development), CASS; and international security analyst Squadron Leader Fahad Masood (Retd). President CASS Air Marshal Farhat Hussain Khan (Retd) chaired the seminar, while Ambassador Jalil Abbas Jilani, Advisor (Foreign Policy) moderated the proceedings.



In her *Keynote Address*, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs **Hina Rabbani Khar** stressed that war and conflict was not in anyone’s favour. Its impacts and repercussions were devastating and long-lasting even when the conflict ended. The Minister highlighted that Pakistan understood the trials and tribulations of war having experienced the same for a decade on its own borders. She stressed that Pakistan continued to call for immediate cessation of hostilities and the need for diplomacy and dialogue for an early, negotiated end to the Ukraine conflict. While expressing concern at the increasing number of

casualties on both sides, deteriorating humanitarian situation, and refugee crisis, she reiterated Pakistan's principled stance of consistent application of UN Charter principles – including primacy, universality of the application of international law without exceptions, indispensability of equal security for all, and diplomatic settlement of disputes in order to ensure lasting peace and security. 'Pakistan followed a non-partisan position in the current crisis. This has remained our consistent position, regardless of the government in power. We are a sovereign state and cannot be forced to take sides,' she said. Answering a question, Ms Khar pointed out that Pakistan has always wanted friendly and cooperative relations with its neighbours, including India, and a result-oriented and meaningful dialogue that can lead to progress on outstanding issues between the two sides. 'However, the environment for such dialogue does not exist since India had gone rogue. The onus is, therefore, on India to take necessary steps to create an environment conducive for dialogue.' To a question about oil and food imports, she said in terms of expanding economic and trade relations with other states, 'Pakistan has an open policy, driven by national interest.'



Former Foreign Secretary, **Ambassador Riaz Khokhar** emphasised that the US does not want a challenger in Europe nor in the Indo-Pacific and was deeply committed to its pre-eminence as a superpower. On the likely impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on the world order, he was of the view that the 'world order was already in disorder' due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was now in a 'tailspin' due to the Ukrainian crises. He stressed that any solution to the current crisis in Kyiv would require an assurance to Russia that Ukraine would not become a member of NATO and that no NATO forces, missiles or equipment

would be deployed on Russia's borders.





While discussing the land war strategy and its outcome vis-à-vis Russian objectives, **Lieutenant General Aamer Riaz (Retd)** suggested that despite lapse of several years, Russia had not yet recovered from the shock of the break-up of the Soviet Union. In fact, he argued that while nobody could be fully prepared for war, Russia had been preparing for years for the day when NATO would cross the 'red line' and expand eastwards. This, he pointed out, was possible only because Russia had maintained continuity of leadership, strategy, and preparedness over the past years, including supplying the cheapest energy to Europeans. Lieutenant General Riaz posited that Kyiv could be a diversionary objective meant to dissuade other states wanting to opt for NATO membership. On US' role, he pointed out that its power had reached a peak point and was receding with challengers like China on the rise, which he predicted would match or even overtake the US in a few decades.

Analysing the economic fall-out of the Ukrainian conflict, **Dr Usman W Chohan** shared that the use of economic sanctions had been a key aspect of the current conflict, but Western attempts to hurt the Russian economy had not yielded desired results. In fact, Russian oil export revenue was up 50% since the start of 2022 with the Kremlin generating close to USD20 billion per month in sales, according to the speaker. Export volume had rebounded to levels seen before Russia invaded Ukraine with increased demand from India and China offsetting declines from the US and Europe. According to Dr Chohan, energy was a key driver of financial and economic health, and Russians had taken timely and significant countermeasures, especially in terms of coordination of their economic machinery with the kinetic machinery which is where countries like Pakistan needed to draw lessons. Dr Chohan lamented that Pakistan (and its currency) were one of the worst affected by the economic issues that had emerged since the conflict, despite maintaining neutrality and being geographically distant. 'Conflicts of such magnitude have far-reaching economic repercussions for countries not party to the conflict themselves, and this war is likely to accelerate international geo-economic shift regarding commodities, currencies and energy', he predicted.



In **Squadron Leader Fahad Masood (Retd)**'s assessment, the Ukraine crisis was a watershed of many sorts, with seismic consequences for the international order and systemic implications for national security, offering many air power lessons for the future. One of those being that since the Russian Air Force had not successfully neutralised mobile, modern SAMs, it had failed to gain air superiority over even moderately well-equipped Ukrainian defence. Although Russians had developed operational theatre commands, they had also not done enough to decentralise execution of operations in the current conflict - a major lesson for all users of aerial force.

While delivering the *Concluding Remarks*, **Air Marshal Farhat Hussain Khan (Retd)** thanked the speakers for their in-depth analysis of the Russia-Ukraine war, especially its impact on Pakistan. He agreed with the speakers that while the West had stayed away from interfering in the war through kinetic means, and had opted to punish Russia through non-kinetic means of war fighting in the economic domain, the sanctions-based economic tactic had not worked. This was due to Moscow's effective counter strategy through which it managed to maintain a resilient posture, healthy trade balance and stronger currency. However, he pointed out that a prolonged war with Ukraine only suited American interests, not Russian as the ongoing war was likely to damage Moscow's military



muscle with question marks on its superpower status in the military domain. On the future outlook of the political and security landscape of the world post-Ukrainian war, President CASS posited that Russia would need to re-equip / reconstruct its military arsenal to at least its pre-war figure and volume and the costs of this effort could be seriously damaging. He conceded that in the international arena, Pakistan needed to remain neutral.



Former diplomats, senior military officers, heads of various think tanks, scholars, journalists, and students, attended the seminar and actively participated in the interactive Question and Answer session.